

2.0 Benefits of Walking

2.1 Why Walking is Important

Walking is important to Carlsbad's future due to its potential to address several interrelated challenges, including traffic, air quality, public health and creating a sense of community. By planning a city that is more walkable than current development patterns allow, the City can affect all of these areas, which collectively can have a profound influence on existing and future quality of life in Carlsbad.



2.1.1 Traffic and Air Quality

Each time a Carlsbad driver chooses to walk, one car is removed from the road. As Carlsbad becomes more inviting to pedestrians, increasing numbers of shopping, restaurant, school and recreational trips will be made on foot. Cumulatively, this pattern may reduce traffic in some neighborhoods, which can also improve air quality. Because pedestrians breathe air without the benefit of air conditioning and tend to respire at a faster rate than automobile occupants, improving air quality in walkable communities is even more important than elsewhere.

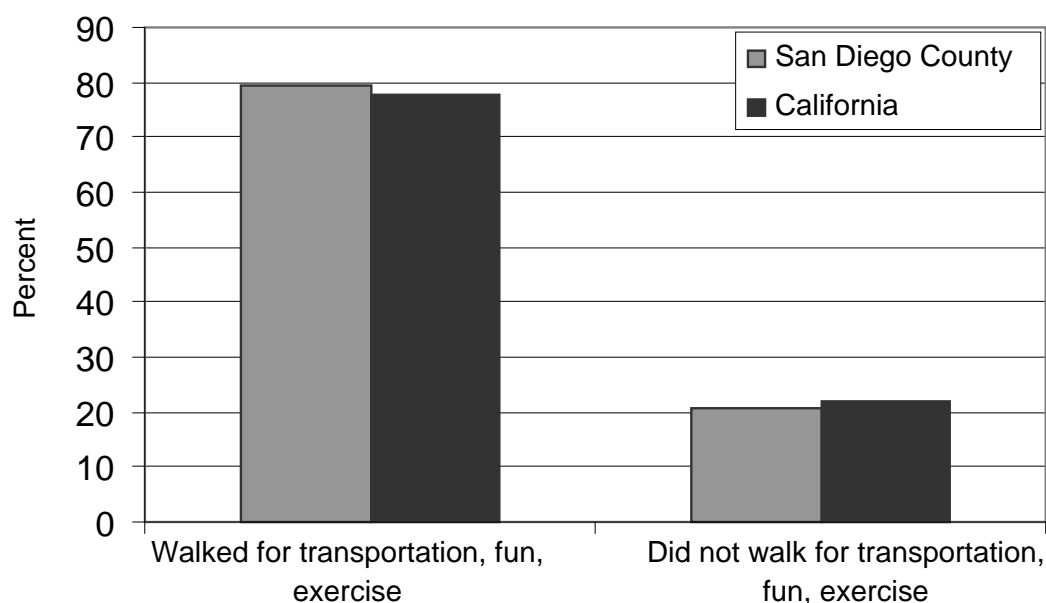
2.1.2 Public Health

In recent years, public health professionals and urban planners have become increasingly aware that the impacts of automobiles on public health extend far beyond asthma and other respiratory conditions caused by air pollution. There is a much deeper understanding of the connection between the lack of physical activity resulting from auto-oriented community designs and various health-related problems such as obesity and other chronic diseases. Although diet and genetic predisposition contribute to these conditions, physical inactivity is now widely understood to play a significant role in the most common chronic diseases in the US, including coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes¹—each of which is a leading cause of death in Carlsbad. In 2003-05 (the most

¹ McKenna, M.T., Taylor, W.R., Marks, J.S., & Koplan, J.P., "Current issues and challenges in chronic disease and control" in *Chronic Disease Epidemiology and Control*, 2nd edition, American Public Health Assn. , 1988.

recent period for which data is available) 26 percent of all deaths in the north coastal region of San Diego County were from heart disease². Stroke and diabetes were responsible for an additional nine percent of deaths during this period.

Figure 2-1 shows that walking statistics for San Diego County are a small margin greater than statewide statistics. The Figure shows responses to the survey question: “Have you walked for transportation, fun, or exercise during the past week?” As shown, nearly 21 percent of San Diego County respondents and 22 percent of California respondents did not walk for any purpose in the previous week.



Source: 2005 California Health Interview Study

Figure 2-1: Walking Trips based on California Health Interview Survey

Physical inactivity can lead to the growing trend of obesity. As **Figure 2-2** shows, obesity or body mass index (weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared) has been on the rise for the last decade in California.

² County of San Diego, HHSA, Public Health Services, Community Health Statistics Unit, 2007

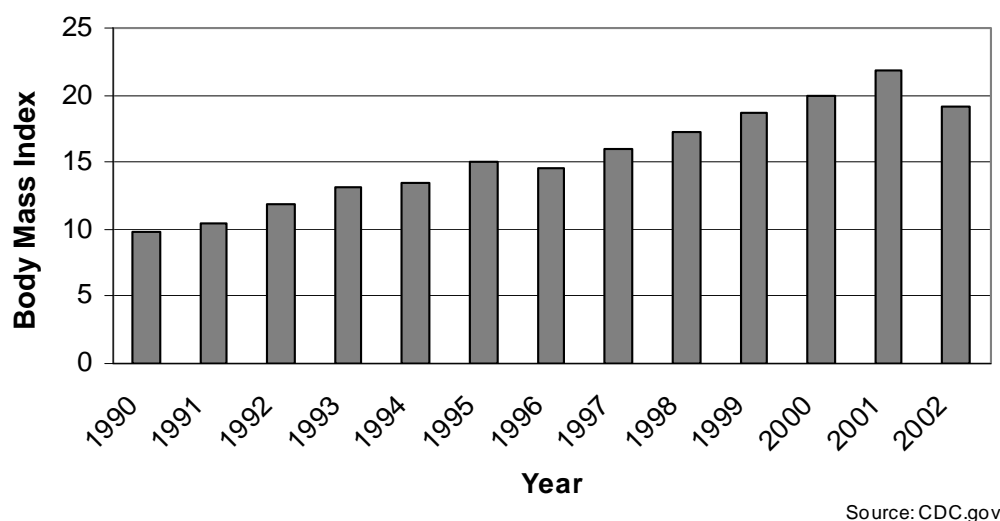
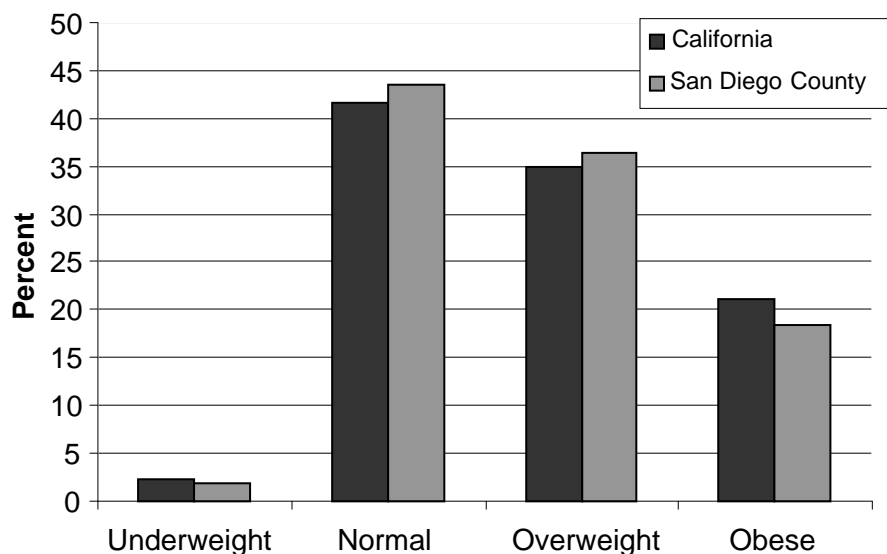


Figure 2-2: Annual Obesity in California by Body Mass Index

Like the state of California, San Diego County also has a growing trend of obesity. **Figure 2-3** shows BMI categorized as underweight, normal, overweight and obese. As shown, San Diego County has approximately two percent more respondents within the normal category than the state of California; however a majority of respondents were either overweight or obese in both the County and the entire state.



Source: 2005 California Health Interview Study

Figure 2-3: Obesity in California and San Diego County

Obesity alone is a health issue and it can also lead to other chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. According to the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Department, heart disease was a leading cause of death between 2003 and 2005 in the County. By providing a pedestrian-friendly environment more people will walk on a regular basis and can help reverse these health trends.

In response to these trends, the public health profession has begun to advocate for the creation of walkable neighborhoods as one of the most effective ways to encourage active lifestyles. Studies show that 43 percent of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home meet recommended activity levels, compared to only 27 percent of those without safe places to walk.³ As Carlsbad becomes a more walkable city, Carlsbad's population will have more opportunities to exercise, ideally resulting in a higher proportion of Carlsbad residents achieving recommended activity levels.

2.1.3 Sense of Community

Cities in which people walk provide more opportunities for chance meetings than do areas where travel is primarily by automobile. Such serendipitous encounters help neighbors get better-acquainted and provide eyes on the street, which can make an area feel and be safer. Carlsbad residents' sense of living in a cohesive community will be enhanced as the City focuses future residential growth in compact, walkable communities, creates shopping districts that cater to those on foot, and provides facilities that enhance the pedestrian experience.

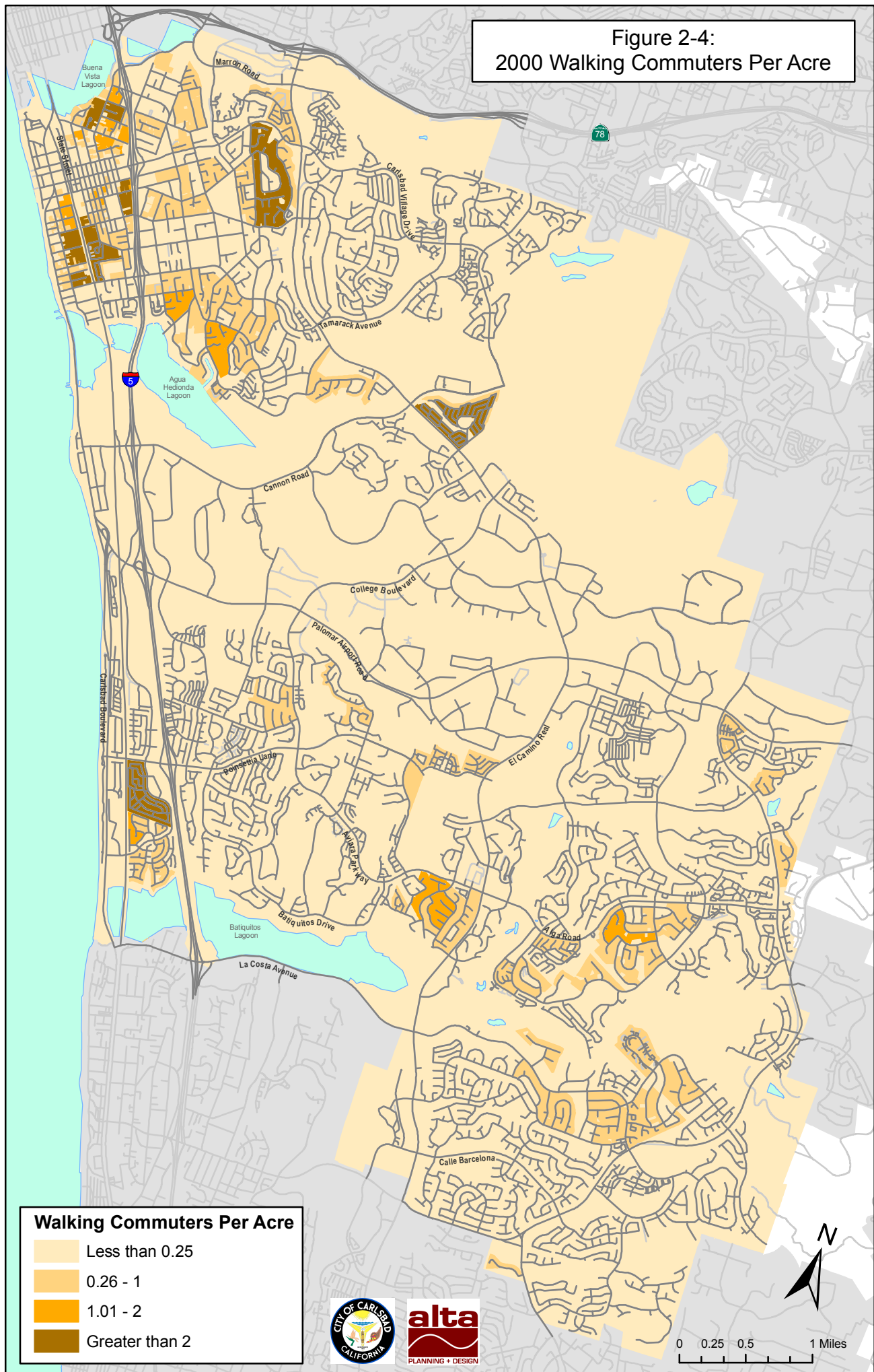


2.2 Current Walking Rates in Carlsbad

According to the 2000 Census, 775 people in Carlsbad reported walking to work. This represents about 0.79% of the commuting population of the City. The proportion of Carlsbad commuters who walk is less than that for the overall San Diego region, which is approximately 3.4%. **Figure 2-4** displays the percent of pedestrian commuters by census block groups. Population residing in the Village reported the highest rates of pedestrian commuting. There are also pockets of high

³ Powell, K.E., Martin, L., Chowdhury, P.P., "Places to walk: Convenience and regular physical activity" in *American Journal of Public Health*, 2003.

Figure 2-4:
2000 Walking Commuters Per Acre



pedestrian commuting in the area roughly bound by Monroe Street, Carlsbad Village Drive, El Camino Real and Tamarack Avenue; and at the southwest corner of Avenida Encinas and Poinsettia Lane.